

The Margaretoologist

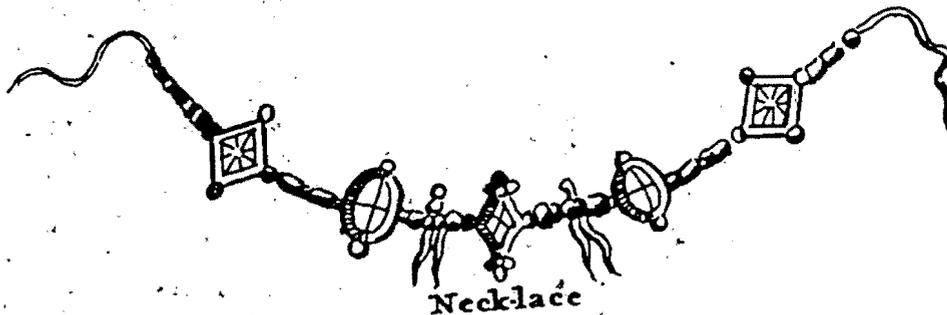
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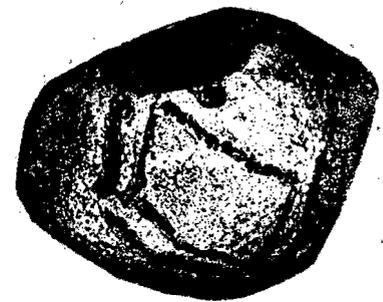
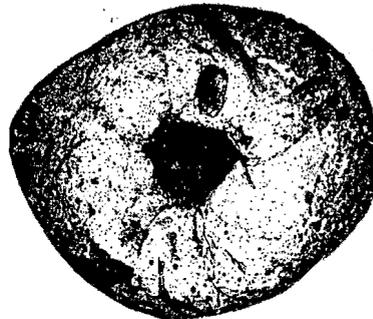
The Journal of the Center for Bead Research

BEADS IN GHANA (WEST AFRICA) PART I I

TWO FAMOUS BEADS



The Aggrey Bead
(After Barbot, 1732, plate 22)
"adorned with gold spells and slips of the sacred tree"



A Bodom Bead
(Two Views)

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Through the Eye of a Needle: The Editor's Page

This issue has a new look, as we have upgraded our desktop publishing to give us more efficient tools. The next issue will be even different as it will be written on the new word processing system. I also now have a laptop computer so I can work on the road. Herein we complete the topic of beads in West Africa begun in the last issue. Because of interest in these beads we may follow up with a separate publication, but will have to see if there is time to do that before the middle of 1992.

As this is our tenth issue after five years, we have put complete sets of the Margaretologist into binders for those missing many issues and bead societies or libraries. It sells for \$50.00, a savings of \$15 over the single issue price. We are also preparing an index to past issues.

With the Chicago Midwest Bead Society generously providing funds, the Center has established the Horace C. Beck Fund for Bead Research to help students in developing countries pursue any aspect of bead studies. It will provide small but most welcome and useful grants to prepare papers for a degree or publication. Any readers who know of such students or schools which could benefit may inquire for further information.

My series on Glass Beads in Asia has begun publication in Asian Perspectives (U. Hawaii). Articles on beads in Asian countries have also begun in Arts of Asia; China in Sept.-Oct. and the Philippines in Nov.-Dec. issues.

Recent visitors to the Center have included archaeologists Sally Dunham, who works in Syria, and Michael Davis, who works in Turkey, glass historian Marianne Stern from the Toledo Museum of Art, and an enthusiastic group of youngsters from Camp Treetops, a local summer camp. There has been much reorganizing at the Center recently, making all of our collections easier to access and to display.

I was pleased to have seen many of you at the Second International Bead Conference in Washington, and also enjoyed recent trips to lecture at the Chicago Midwest Bead Society and open an exhibit at the Appleton Museum in Ocala, Florida. In November it is the Greater Chicago Bead Society and the Central Ohio Bead Society (Columbus). In December I am off for a most exciting time, taking part in the UNESCO Silk Roads Project, sailing for a month on the yacht of the Sultan of Oman from Madras, India to Bangkok, Thailand. At several stops conferences will be held on ancient trade routes. Late in the year I join the new excavations at Arikamedu, India. In March 1992 I look forward to chairing the glass trade bead conference in Santa Fe, "And Glass Beads They Hung on their Necks..." marking the 500th anniversary of Columbus' stumbling upon America. The speakers who have accepted are a top-notch group of bead researchers. More anon.

REMEMBER: If you move, please let us know. We hate to have issues returned, as it means we have lost track of one of our valued friends. Also, the last numbers on your mailing label shows the the last issue you receive with your current subscription. This is 3:2; if your mailing label has that number, it is time to renew or upgrade to a Patron (\$75 for two years) or Supporter (\$200 for two years), who receive additional publications as issued.

The Margaretologist, the official journal of the Center for Bead Research, is published twice a year for Members, Patrons, and Supporters of the Center. Members (\$25 for two years), Patrons (\$75 for two years) and Supporters (\$200 for two years) also receive other benefits [subscribers outside the U.S.A. add \$5]. Patrons are sent new books as we publish them; Supporters also receive the Contributions series. Contents of the Margaretologist are copyright © 1990 by Peter Francis Jr. Permission for Reproduction must be obtained in writing.

BEADS IN GHANA (WEST AFRICA) PART 2

THE MYSTERIOUS AGGREY BEAD

With the exception of wampum and perhaps chevrons, no bead has had so much printer's ink spilled over it as the Aggrey bead. Europeans along the Gold Coast in the early 16th century noticed its great value locally, often worth its weight in gold. Later travelers fanned speculations about its origin, linking it to everyone from the Phoenicians to the Druids. In this century many scholars have tried to work out just what an aggrey bead could be.

No one knows what an Aggrey Bead is. Today in Ghana the term is only used when dealing with foreigners; it does not denote a certain bead. But it was once the name of a bead. I do not claim to solve the problem here, but the question is important for bead research, and I believe we have come close to a solution.

No one can show us an Aggrey bead today. They probably exist, but are no longer called that. The only possible picture of one [Figure 1, cover] is not very helpful. It is history that tells us about this bead, and history to which we shall first turn. Table 1 shows the the major mentions of Aggrey beads up to the 20th century.

T A B L E 1: Aggrey Beads in the Literature

Author	Date:page	Name	Color	Material	Source
Pacheco Pereria	1508:125	cori	blue		
	1508:139	cori	blue		Rio de Forcados
Pacheco (Kimble)	1937:120	cori	blue		
	1937:128	cori	blue	shell	Rio de Forcados
Bothelho	1508:98	cori			"the rivers"
Portuguese Pilot	1540:153	coral	blue	stone	Manicongo
Eden	1555:343		blue	stone	
DeMarees	1602:354		blue,	stone	Rio de Andra
(information from Ruiters)			black, green		
Brun	1624:69	accory	dichroic	coral	Niger delta
			blue/green		and Cameroons
Ogilby*	1670:473	Akori	bluish	coral	Benin
Dapper*	1686:298+	Accori	blue	coral	Rio del Rey, etc.
Bosman	1708:119	Agrie/ Accorri	blue	coral	
Barbot	1732:236	Accorri	blue	coral	Benin
	1732:348	Agrie Accorri	blue	stone	Andra
Isert	1793:156f.		blue	2 stones	Andra, Fida
Levden*	1799:167	aigri	greenish blue	jasper	
Bowdich	1819:268	aggry	blue, green yellow, red, variegated		Dankara, Akim, Warsaw, Abante, Fantee
Price*	1883	Aggri	variegated		Phoenicia
Kingsley	1897:67	Aggry			Phoenicia
Freeman	1898:399f.	Aggri	variegated and plain		Ashanti, Jaman

[Notes on Table 1: Writers marked with an asterisk are secondary compilers. Dates are of the original editions. Page numbers for the following are found in other editions: Pacheo Pereria 1508 is in Mauny 1956. Pacheo (Kimble) is Kimble's translation of 1937. Bothelho, the Pilot and Eden are in Blake 1942, the first two in Vol. 1, Eden in Vol. 2. DeMarees is in Purchas 1905. Brun is in Jones 1983. Bowdich is from the 1966 reprint.]

The Name of the Bead

The name has undergone subtle changes over time. In the 16th century it was approximately "cori." The anonymous Portuguese pilot's "coral" is probably a misprint: "stone which our king causes to be brought from Manicongo, where it is called coral." In the 17th century the form was "accory," which is understandable as the Fante adaptation of the word. Fante is a member of the Twi language group, which commonly affixes an "a" sound to many nouns.

In the next century "aggrey" emerged. Linguistically "k" and "g" are interchangeable, apparently the Europeans were responsible. Bosman [1708: 119] said, "we call Agrie, and the Negroes Accorri." Barbot [1732:236] said, "by the Europeans called Agrie, and by the Blacks, Acorri."

Time and again it was said no one knew the origin of the word. Quiggen [1949:38] thought it was a corruption of the European "coral," commonly used for beads of many kinds, but "cori" was in use at the beginning of European trade, and the Europeans learned it from the Africans [Jeffreys 1961:96]. Jeffreys [1961] argued that it came from "cowry," believing that cowries were replaced by a blue bead as a form of currency, retaining its name. But Aggreys were not used as currency nor did they displace cowries, which were a European introduction along the coast [Hogendorn and Gemery 1988:128-30]. Anyway, the word for cowry on the Coast was "boejies" or something similar.

One more name should be mentioned here, as it becomes important later: "Koli," the "cooked beads" we discussed in the last issue [see Teshi House, p. 8]. Linguistically "l" and "r" are commonly substituted. The Ashanti name for this bead is "Gyanie" and the Fante "Ekaur" or "Kor."

The Color of Aggreys

Before the 19th century Aggrey beads are always described as being blue. DeMarees (quoting Ruiters) spoke of blue, green, and black beads, without calling them Aggreys. His, Eden's, and Isert's accounts were included since they described valuable beads sold to the Gold Coast, and have been cited by others, but DeMarees and Isert were apparently not writing about Aggreys.

Brun (or Braun) said the Aggrey was "sky-blue; but if one looks through it, it is entirely sea-green" [Jones 1983:69], an effect called dichroism. Others did not mention this, but perhaps Brun was a more careful observer. The Portuguese, Ermanuel Ximenes, who never went to Africa, asked Antonio Neri, Europe's leading glass expert, how to produce dichroic blue/green glass to imitate a "stone" bead popular on the Gold Coast [Zecchin 1964:24].

But something happened beginning with Bowdich (ca. 1814). He described Aggreys as blue, green, yellow, or red or with "variegated strata...so firmly united and so imperceptibly blended, that the perfection seems superior to art: some resemble mosaic work, the surfaces of others are covered with flowers and regular patterns, so very minute, and the shades so delicately softened one into the other, and into the ground of the bead, that nothing but the finest touch of the pencil could equal them. The

agatized parts disclose flowers and patterns, deep in the body of the bead, and thin shafts, of opaque colours, running from the centre to the surface." [Bowdich 1966:268]

Following this is a discussion of false, locally made Aggrey beads, which he thought could not have been locally made, a statement that Aggreys breed, and an extended footnote in which he relates Aggrey beads to beads found in Wiltshire, the Glain Neidye of the peasant Britains, and an exhaustive explanation of south Indian megaliths by "a gentleman lately returned from India", who was comparing Aggrey beads with etched carnelians!

Bowdich was quite confused. Not only did he call every bead around an Aggrey, but the bead that breeds is a Bodom, not an Aggrey [see next story]. However, his exploits were widely read, and as the first Englishman into the forbidding Ashanti country, he was widely believed. What mosaic bead he was describing is difficult to say. The evidence is growing that Venetian mosaic or millifiori beads were not made in any great amount before the end of the 19th century. These could be early examples or, as he says the glass penetrated to the center of the bead, they may well be Islamic mosaic beads.

By Bowdich's time Aggreys were no longer being imported; trade in them had ceased. They would not have all disappeared. Beads do go out of style, but Ghanaians do not throw away valuable beads. Maybe the Ashanti were pleased to fool the "inquisitive white man," and once the Europeans started calling other beads Aggrey, convinced they were Phoenician or whatever, the natives encouraged them, neatly keeping their knowledge to themselves. It may also be that the Ashantis never called the Aggreys by that name.

The Material of Aggreys

From multiple experiences, I can attest that many people have problems in recognizing bead materials, particularly glass. The written identifications of Aggreys must be taken with some caution, for this and other reasons.

The English translation of Pacheo Pereria by Kimble [1937] contains an error. Page 128 reads, "some blue shells with red stripes which they call coris." This has confused some later writers [Jeffreys 1961:107; Davison et al. 1971:646]. We need not look for blue shells with red stripes, we can look at the Portuguese original [Mauny 1956:138]. The word is not "concha" (shell) but "contas," which means simply "bead." The two are easily mixed up, especially when in manuscript, so we cannot blame Kimble too much. Fage [1962:344 n. 5] also caught this error.

Coral was often used in describing Aggreys. "Coral" was (and is in Dutch and Russian) a common word in many European tongues for beads in general, as is "pearl." Those who use coral to describe Aggreys were Dutch, or worked for the Dutch, or used mostly Dutch sources, except for Barbot, who used both coral and stone.

The Portuguese pilot, Eden, Leyden, and once Barbot call Aggreys stone. But, if Brun and Ximenes are right that they were dichroic, this eliminates all corals and most minerals, save cordierite, which had been considered but rejected by Davison [1970], as none is found in the area and no beads of cordierite are known in West Africa.

Turning to later writers, we see considerable doubt as to the nature of Aggreys. Wiener [1922:237-48] said there never was a single Aggrey bead, and then discussed coral and agates in Africa, as though they were Aggreys. Gautier equated Aggrey beads with carbuncles (carnelian) of the Garamantes

[Bovill 1968:26-7], but red stones are not colored blue. Mauny [1949] proposed a coral, *Allopora subviolacea*, but later [1958] learned it would not work, and ended with no conclusion. Davison [1970] considered and rejected cordierite. Kalous [1968] suggested Aggreys were made of glass from Ife, Nigeria, but then [1979a] proposed tektites, which are rare, rarely blue, and never dichroic. Van Landerwijk [1971] suggested iron slag, which Kalous [1979:201-3] criticized on several grounds. The glassy blue material found at iron smelting sites is technically not slag but results from the ash of the fuel interacting with the clay of the furnace. Its melting point (about 1400°C) is too high to have been remelted and made into beads. It could be ground and perforated [Killick 1990], but no such beads are known.

We are left with glass, though not a single observer mentioned it. This conclusion has been reached by most other writers on the subject.

Imitation Aggreys were also mentioned. Ximenes said that in 1603 a Dutch factory produced "corallina," sold to imitate the precious stone [Zecchin 1955:104-5]. Even earlier (1540) the Portuguese pilot wrote, "some wear necklaces of glass, which are very similar [to coris] but which will not bear the heat of fire." [Blake 1942:153] Bowdich heard that the Ashantis imitated Aggreys, but did not believe it.

The Source of Aggreys

By the mid 17th century Aggrey imports had ceased and Bowdich and Freeman said they came from areas within the Gold Coast. Before them, however, all writers pointed east: Ardra or Fida (inland from the Togo and Benin coast), Benin (western Nigeria), the Niger delta, and Manicongo (north of the Zaire River). It appears that Ardra and Fida were way-stations.

Isert [1793:156-7] discussed two stones found at Popo on the Togo-Benin coast. One resembled lapis lazuli, but was probably not the Aggrey. The other resembled hyacinth (today a reddish-orange zircon, but earlier a blue stone). This "stone" was dug up and already shaped like a piece of pipe stem and pierced. Forbes [1851:28] also mentioned the "Popo bead," a blue glass bead locally dug up, where he assumed must have been an ancient city, as well as an imitation which could easily be detected. Bowdich [1966:267] drew a sharp distinction between Aggreys and the Popo bead.

Following Bowdich was a rash of speculations about the origin of Aggreys. Price's paper [1883], typical of bead literature in general of the day, bunched together many different beads ranging from Roman millefiori, chevrons, Viking millefiori, and others. His own "Aggri beads" had been found in Colchester, England, no doubt Phoenician and brought on the neck of a Roman Nubian slave. By the time Kingsley was writing [1897:67], the Phoenician origin was taken to have been proven. Claridge [1915:26-7] even went as far in his history to use this "established fact" to prove that the Phoenicians had sailed to the Gold Coast! Cardinal [1925] was perhaps the first to debunk the Phoenician origin. Chevrons and Venetian millefioris have been the most common "Aggrey beads" in more recent times.

The Archaeological Evidence

The most intriguing work on Aggreys is by Davison, Giauque, and Clark [1971] and Davison [1972]: Although Davison et al. avoided the term "aggrey," they suggested that the dichroic blue/green beads probably fell into the class at

some time. They analyzed samples of dichroic beads and found two groups. The beads of one were found at Ife, Nigeria and old cities involved in the trans-Saharan trade. Ife has long been known to have been a glassworking center, but there is still no proof that glass was made there [Sutton 1982]. The other group of beads were at later sites in Nigeria and Benin.

The chemical compositions of these groups differed. The older beads have a higher melting point, and the newer ones contained lead. All the newer beads had been reworked, giving them more opacity and "stretch marks" [Davison et al. 1971:650-4]. At Ife, many beads were also reworked, melted and formed into different sorts of beads [Davison 1972:260-2].

It is not too much of a leap to link the older beads with Aggreys: 1. They are dichroic blue/green. 2. They are old enough to be considered valuable. 3. They were apparently reworked at a place not far from the traditional sources of Aggreys. 4. Their melting temperature was rather higher than the later beads, confirming the Portuguese pilot's observation. The newer beads are consistent with "imitation Aggreys:" 1. They are dichroic blue/green. 2. They are newer. 3. They, too, have been reworked as Koli beads. 4. They melt at a lower temperature than the older beads. 5. They are heavier, which Bowdich reported about "local" imitations.

Summary, Conclusions, and Hypotheses

There is no question that Aggrey beads were blue. It is also likely that they were dichroic blue and green, as one eye witness and one would-be imitator told us. If they were dichroic they could hardly be anything but glass. Even if they were just blue, there are few local blue materials that would make successful beads, nor are any blue beads other than glass known from archaeological sites or ethnographic contexts in Ghana.

There is no evidence for glass made in sub-Saharan Africa until recently. Aggrey beads predate the coming of the Europeans, who found them there. They must have come through the trans-Saharan trade with the Arabs, who are well known to have traded glass beads. Yaqut (ca. 1124) tells us that goods from Morocco to the ancient kingdom of Ghana included, "salt, bundles of pine wood... blue glass beads, bracelets of red copper, bangles and signet rings of copper, and nothing else." [Levtzion and Hopkins 1981:169; emphasis mine]. Dichroic blue beads are found in sites of the old Sudanese kingdoms, including Kumbi Salah, the capital of ancient Ghana.

Davison [1972:266-9] believed that the beads were made in Europe, but this is not necessarily so. The Early Islamic (7th to 12th century) bead trade was largely self-sufficient, and there were several sophisticated glass centers in the Muslim world at that time [Francis 1989; n.d.]. This widespread, important industry has only just begun to be studied.

The beads were probably re-worked at Ife, for reasons not yet clear, at least as early as the 10th to the 12th century [Davison 1972:269]. Beads may have continued to be exported long after they were made or reworked. The "cooking" of Koli beads appears to have begun to imitate Aggreys, and the name echoes "cori/accory/aggrey." The Popo beads may or may not have been true Aggreys,

The Gyanie bead of the Ashantis and the Ekaur or Kor of the Fantes are usually equated with the Ga/Krobo Koli bead [Quarm 1989:73; Fage 1981: 208-9], but this has never been systematically investigated. This makes little sense, for why would modern "cooked" beads be so valuable among these

people? Oral tradition among the Adanse (who claim to be the original Ashantis) say that the Gyanie (as well as Bodoms and other precious beads) come from the north [Daaku 1969:passim; see following story]. Maybe some of them did come directly through the trans-Saharan trade, and later (via life and reworked) from the coast. The Ashanti are the most likely people still to have Aggreys because of their economic and political dominance of the region and their conservative attitude toward beads. Perhaps the Ashanti never called these beads Aggreys, which would account for the garbled accounts Bowdich and Freeman gathered from them. Though the Fantes retained the term, the beads are said no longer to be available [Fage 1981].

This "summary" is really only an hypothesis. It seems most reasonable, as it fits all of the known data. But, as with every hypothesis, it needs testing, especially along these lines:

1. We need more of the sort of work that Davison pioneered in Africa, geared toward West Africa especially and toward this problem in particular, working with well stratified examples from the western Sudan, and the region from Ghana through Nigeria.

2. We need more definite information about life, and in particular its glassworking and/or glassmaking. With this statement every African archaeologist would agree.

3. The "Gyanie" beads of the Ashanti should be examined if at all possible to see just what sort of bead or beads they are. It should also be seen if there are no more genuine Ekaur or Kor beads among the Fante.

THE BODOM-BEAD

The most highly regarded beads in Ghana are the Bodom. They are often very expensive, some fetching hundreds of dollars. One given to me enraptured Elizabeth Bruce of Teshi House for a half hour as she examined it over and over, telling me by whom and how such beads were to be worn.

What is a Bodom? Lamb [1976] cautiously defined them as large, usually yellow powder-glass beads decorated with red, green and brown patterns and most often having a dark brown or black core. Kalous [1979b] took strong exception to this (by no means did their acrimonious debate all end up in print). He could not believe that Bodom beads were powder-glass beads; they were too precious, too rare, and powder-glass beads were much too recent. My limited experience in Ghana and the long experience of Dr. J.E.J.M. van Landewijk, have convinced me that Lamb was right. Whether, as Lamb believed, they were made by the Krobos, remains to be seen.

Lamb [1976:37] asked Kwame Daaku of the University of Ghana to include questions about beads in his interviews collecting oral traditions. In his work with the Adanse [Daaku 1969] he conducted interviews with groups of people from 16 villages to whom he asked questions about beads. In detail, the answers differed slightly, but there was much general agreement. All named Bodom among the important beads. In 12 cases they were said to come from the north, and in 10 cases (some overlap) from the ground. In two cases, the person finding such beads was known [pp. 266, 315]. It was always affirmed that Bodom could reproduce by putting one into a pot, sometimes covering it with an egg or other things and allowing it to sit about a year. At the end of that time there would be 1, 2, 3, or 6 new Bodoms or some other valuable beads. Most respondents said that Bodoms reflected a chief's dignity or respect or that they showed wealth. The Asona and Ekooma clans

were called the "grandchildren of beads" either because they had many Bodoms or were descended from the beads themselves.

Adanse figures prominently in Ashanti oral tradition, the Adanse claiming to be the original Ashantis. The Adanse region is south of Kumasi and much of the Ashanti region, but "the North" obviously referred to areas beyond Ashanti, either northern Ghana or further into the Sudan (in one case, it was related that guns came from Jenne before Europeans brought them).

Old beads are found in the ground sometimes, often after rains as was mentioned in several villages. They may have been in graves or in sites of abandoned settlements. But the insistence on the beads coming from the north is intriguing. We know that glass beads came across the Sahara to Begho centuries ago. Could the Bodoms have come the same way?

Lamb was convinced that the Krobo had made Bodom beads. He "put the hypothesis of a Krobo origin of Bodom beads to a practical test" [1976:37] by having a Mr. Tettah make beads for him, trying to copy Bodoms. They were "sufficiently close to satisfy me [Lamb] that the old Bodom beads must have been produced by the Krobo." [p. 38]. But there is a problem which Lamb overlooked: Bodom beads are not made the same way that modern powder-glass beads are, nor in the way that Tettah made them for Lamb.

Remember the dark core of Bodoms? This results from making the beads by a process Liu [1984:56] calls "wet-forming." A mold is not used, but a glass core bound together by sugar or gum arabic (which give a dark core when heated) or saliva is covered with powdered glass. Beads are made this way in Mauritania (see Opper and Opper [1989] for the latest literature), but no one has traced its history there. Recent ones are quite elaborate and often copy European trade beads; those purchased by Mauny in 1949 were plainer.

This is not to suggest that the Ghanaian Bodom beads were made in Mauritania, but that they might have been made somewhere in the Sudan, with the "wet-forming" technique still surviving there. It is also possible that the wet-forming technique was used by the Krobo, the Ashanti or someone else in Ghana and passed out of use, but then why is the tradition so strong that they come from the north into the Ashanti region? The bead goes on...

THE USES OF BEADS

I claim no special insight into the uses of beads in Ghana. There was no chance of investigating this in depth, as I do not speak any of the local languages. In discussions with many people, the material here has been largely confirmed, but little new material came to light. This section mostly relies upon the work of others. Of the sources used, the most extensive is Quarim [1989], who via personal interviews and a questionnaire gathered information from the Ashanti and Akim of central Ghana, the Aowim and Nzima of the southwest, the Ga and Krobo west of the Volta, and the Ewe east of the Volta. Sackey [1985] is especially strong on the Fante and the Dipo ceremony; Kumekpor [1970-1] on the Ewe; and Cole [1975] presents a good summary and compares uses between Ghana and Kenya.

There appears to be no survey made among the northern tribes, which is a gap in our knowledge. A necklace especially favored by them is made of many very thin round discs of plastic. Some of these are Vulcanite, a type of rubber, but one given to me by a woman of the region bought in 1962 is of highly flammable plastic. Most of these are Czech and several of the cards of J.F. Sick & Co. are filled with them [see last issue, pp. 5-6].

Everyone wears beads, but not all beads. In Quarm's survey, only a black, squarish seed of a tree (I have not been able to identify it botanically) and local and imported glass beads were worn by people of all ages and both sexes. Stone, ivory, and coral beads were only worn by women and older men; plastic and bamboo only by young women. My observations suggest that young men making bamboo beads for their sweethearts is their major source.

Beads are, of course, worn for decoration in Ghana, but they are reserved especially for various occasions. They mark one's affiliation, including ethnic and religious. They are status symbols; only wealthy or important people wear certain beads. Old and good beads are highly valued, and handed down as heirlooms from mother to daughter and form part of the stool regalia of kings. (Stools, low wooden backless seats, often with elaborate bases, are the personal property of individuals, and serve as thrones for the kings of the various regions -- skins take their place in the north).

Beads perform certain magical functions. They are used as charms, but rather little information on this is available. In Ashanti an accused person is supposed to swallow a Bodom (perhaps ground up) in water, which will choke him if he is lying. As medicine, they are used especially in conjunction with childbirth, to prevent miscarriages, strengthen weak necks or straighten crooked legs. Priests of the Adanse village of Patakoru, recorded by Daaku [1969:325] used certain beads to see into the future. Other beads were used to cure madness in children or as "medicine in war." Quarm [1989:40] recorded the interesting tradition that as the Ewes were coming from their ancestral home in Togo they met much armed resistance. Having run out of ammunition, they substituted their wives' and children's beads, which rendered them victorious, a hitherto unrecorded use for beads!

However, the most important function of beads is that they mark every stage of one's life, from birth to death. After eight days children are assumed to have survived and are given beads, often small white glass ones to signify happiness. The mother wears the same beads. Beads often mark one's position in the family. For example, among the Aowim and Nzima the third, fifth, seventh, ninth, and tenth child (Ghanaians often have large families), twins, and the two children born after the twins wear beads of certain patterns to distinguish them. Among the Fante, Abem strands are worn by the third, seventh, ninth, and tenth child, twins, and the next child.

At puberty, girls undergo a ceremony called Dipo. Among the Ga and Krobo this used to last a year, but now only lasts a week; among the Ashanti, Akim, Aowim, and Nzima it lasts only a day. The girl wears little else than a great mass of beads [see cover and p. 2 of last issue]. If the family does not have many beads, they rent them from a family who has no girl of that age. After the ceremony she is ready to find a husband. Her scanty clothing shows off her charms, and her beads show the wealth of her family.

Beads are given as dowry (actually bride-price) in some groups. The Akim, Ashanti, Aowim, and Nzima use eye beads not only to symbolize the boy's attraction for the girl, but also his hope that her parents will agree with the match, and to remind the girl to work hard and help him as his wife.

Beads play a major role in sexual attraction. Girls and women wear a strand of beads to hold their loincloths, which are also meant to give them a shapely appearance; strands on the calves help shape their legs. A woman or her husband will rattle waist beads when aroused to whet the desires of the other. Older Ghanaians report that the man playing with them is common during love-making. Describing one's beads to a man not her husband is tantamount to adultery. Men can also take oaths on his wife's waist beads.

Beads are used in the initiation ceremony of both priests and kings. As said before, they become an important part of the stool regalia and distinctive beads are worn by the priests of different cults.

When a person returns from a long journey, beads are given to celebrate a safe voyage. Among the Ewe a ceremony called Talulu is performed in which beads are tied to the wrist of a person who has completed a dangerous journey, has recovered from a deadly disease, has escaped from an accident, or otherwise miraculously survived. These beads are usually good ones, and become the property, and hence some of the wealth, of the lucky recipient. Usually only glass beads are used, though gold beads are acceptable.

Beads also mark death. Quarm [1989:38] observed that while the dead were often buried with beads in the past, that has now fallen out of fashion. However, the corpse is often bedecked in beads, and the family decides if they accompany it to the grave. Mourners also wear beads of the same colors as their clothes: black, brown, or red. An Akim expression for mourning is "ye ko we abo" (we are going to chew stones). The Abo is the reddish-brown bauxite bead, made in Ghana, and important to many people. Ashanti kings are presented with a Bodom at their death beds.

Beads play an integral and integrating role Ghanaian culture. This is as true today as in the past. But it may come as a surprise to many who are not Ghanaians that the beads which are of the greatest importance to the people are not European trade beads. Those may be appreciated for their beauty, but they play almost no part in traditional bead lore. The beads that are important are beads made locally or predate European contact. They truly are the beads of the people, and these truly are people of the beads.

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